

To: CT General Assembly Environmental Committee

From: Captain Joseph A. Lynch

78 Topstone Drive, Danbury, CT 06810

Reference: S.B. No. 699 (COMM) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MINIMUM AGE FOR TOWING ANY PERSON BY VESSEL AND REQUIRING THE COMPLETION OF A SAFE TOWING COURSE PRIOR TO ENGAGING IN SUCH TOWING BY VESSEL.

I first want to recognize that the efforts by Sen. Frantz, 36th District; Rep. Floren 149th District; Rep. Camillo, 151st District and Rep. Bocchino, 150th District need to be commended. No family should ever have to experience the horror of that day as experienced by the Fedorko family.

Unfortunately I do not believe that this bill will do anything to ensure that terrible day is not repeated. Ignorance, attitude, lack of attention will not be changed by a power point presentation given on-line or in a class room. In my opinion the only way to begin to address this would be actual on-water instruction and testing of skillset to ensure that the person at the helm understands the dynamics of water skiing and boating before they are allowed out on the water.

If an individual wants to drive a car they must go through and pass a driver's test. If you want a license to fly you must fly a course solo. If you want to cut hair in a barber shop you must first pass an exam by cutting someone's hair. Why do we allow people to take a "safe boating" course and allow them to operate a boat upwards of sixty feet long without experience or testing of their skillsets? Now there is a movement to require only children sixteen and under to zip through an on-line course in towing and expect them to be safer! I doubt very much that will happen. There are too many other things going on in a young teenager's world that will cause that training course to last more than a few minutes in their consciousness. I believe in safe boating education. The statistics show that it has reduced accidents and injuries, save lives and reduce insurance costs. I do not believe this bill will do any of that.

Currently there are provisions in the class room course that addresses water skiing and tubing as well as other forms of recreational towing. In effect this bill will only duplicate what is already in the training.

Other points to consider: Currently the statutes allows for a person under the age of sixteen to operate a vessel without a "Safe Boating Certificate" (SBC) provided there is a person eighteen and older who has held an SBC for at least two years. I am not a lawyer but isn't an individual under the age of eighteen a minor and therefore is not legally responsible? If that is indeed correct then isn't it redundant to have this instruction since there is no way of knowing that they can operate the boat to begin with?

I would support and do everything in my power, if this bill was to change the requirements and make everyone eighteen and under and those who have never driven a boat take a practical on water skillset review prior to issuance of a Safe Boating Certificate.

My Credentials:

I have been an instructor in Safe Boating for many years. I am currently certified by the states of Connecticut and New York as a Safe Boating Instructor. I am certified by the National Safe Boating Council in close quarter and open water boating instruction. This course was sponsored by the boating Division of the CT. DEEP to ensure their instructors have practical experience. I am a former US Coast Guard Auxiliary Safe Boating Instructor. I am an instructor with the US Power Squadrons as well as the former Educational Officer for District Two. I am a private provider instructor for Safe Boating certification. I teach a continual learning course in coastal navigation at Norwalk Community College. I am a US Coast Guard license Merchant Marine Captain for vessels up to fifty ton with commercial towing and sailing endorsements. Lastly I have been a seasonal employee of the DEEP Boating Division working as a Boating Education Assistant. I have been stationed at the busiest launch ramp in the entire state. Latin's Cove, Lake Candlewood Danbury, CT. During my time there I have seen a preponderance of "boaters" who are really clueless at times. I have called upon the enforcement officers on the lake more than a few times to intercept unsafe boaters in order to make the lake safer.

In closing, while I agree that something should be done, let's not rush to judgment and change statutes that only duplicate what is already there. This does not help anyone nor does it make the waterways safer. Only practical instruction, practical experience building skillsets with practical examination will make the waterway safer

Sincerely,

Captain Joseph A. Lynch